

May 20, 2010

1400 CST

Water Quality Protection Division



Mississippi Canyon 252 Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico Region 6 Update

Subject: **Water Quality Division Update # 15**
 Mississippi Canyon 252 Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico

Date: May 20, 2010

Reporting Period: May 20, 2010 1300 – May 21, 2010 1300

Situation Status:

CWPPRA Situational Report 5/20/10 1300 CDT

- NOAA forecasts created on 5/19/10 at 2000 CDT for 5/20/10 at 1800 CDT forecasts the oil slick to stretch southeast of the Mississippi Delta westward towards Barataria and Terrebonne Bay. Satellite imagery analysis performed by NOAA indicates that the slick extends towards the west past Southwest Pass and to the southeast near the Loop Current. Winds are forecast to from the southeast through Saturday with wind speeds of 10-15 knots. Ocean models indicate that there is a weak eastward current keeping the oil from moving beyond Caillou Bay but stronger westward currents plus persistent southeast winds may push the oil slick towards Atchafalaya Bay.

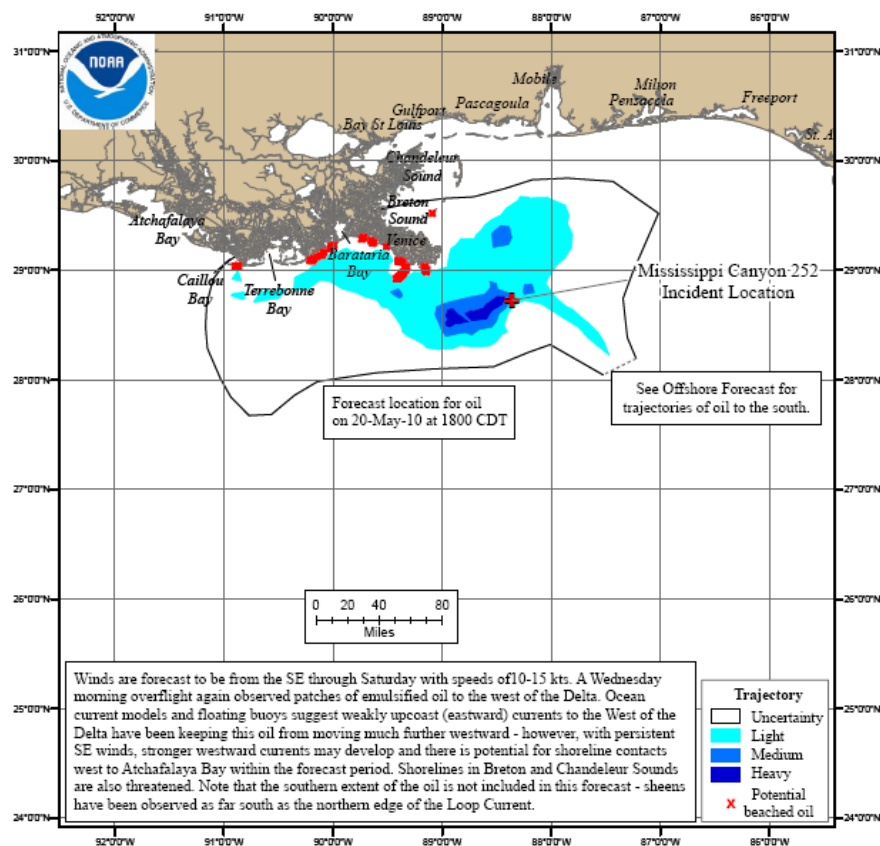


Figure 1 NOAA Oil Slick Estimate provided in NOAA situational report for Deepwater Horizon incident

- There is an additional slick caught in an eddy north of the Loop Current. See attached map (Figure 2).

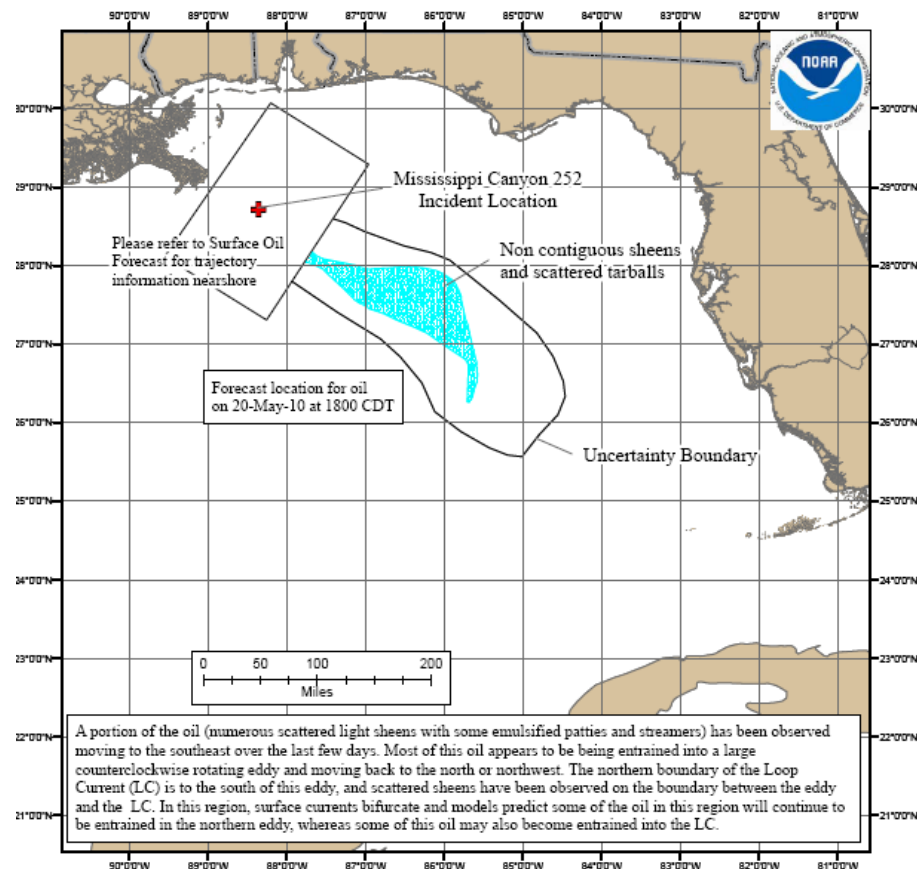


Figure 2 NOAA forecast of oil slick near Loop Current.

Monitoring and Assessment

- Watershed Management and Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff attended a conference call with R6/R4 and HQ to discuss the development of the draft unified sampling plan and R6/R4 consistency with respect to sampling protocols. It is anticipated that the unified plan will describe the overall EPA monitoring strategy for air and water, followed by appendices that include the R4 and R6 QASPs for the baseline (pre-impact) monitoring. EPA HQ is preparing a draft outline of the document (anticipate completion of the outline tomorrow).
- Watershed Management and Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff are continuing to coordinate with REOC and HQ staff on the development of a process to ensure that R6 and R4 are informed of any water quality data indicating "yellow" or "red" levels of risk to aquatic life prior to that data and information being posted on EPA's oil spill response website. This early coordination is needed to ensure that R6 and R4 can be aware of the data/reasons supporting the "yellow" or "red" characterization, and so that R6 and R4

have the appropriate information available when responding to any questions from the public following the posting of the information.

- Watershed Management and Monitoring and Watershed Assessment staff will be participating on a call today between R6, R4, HQ, and state departments of health to discuss: concerns from the state departments of health about how EPA is characterizing its results from the water sampling data (e.g., "red," "yellow," "green" characterization) and potential alternative approaches; the human health exposure scenarios being used to develop human health screening values which will, in turn, be used to interpret sampling data results; and, coordination relative to the beach closure messages communicated to the public.
- Continued regular meetings and calls with Region 4, HQ, & REOC.

Drinking Water

- Drinking water intakes, public drinking water wells, and domestic wells have not been impacted by the oil sheen and are not projected to be impacted.
- EPA Region 6 is providing the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) daily situation report as well as data summaries as they become available.
- EPA Region 6 continues to coordinate closely with the LDHH on all drinking water issues.

Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA)

- Oil has been reported in the Pass a Loutre area likely impacting MR-09, Mississippi Delta Wide Crevasses (NMFS sponsored).

Coastal Habitat Impacts

Louisiana Large-Scale Coastal Barrier Plan:

- Ongoing coordination and analyses with OW and Region 6 staff and managers regarding the State's coastal protection application for emergency permit authorizations from the Corps to construct sand barriers in the Chandeleur and Grand Terre Island areas to reduce inland movement of the oil. OW is taking the lead and Regional staff members are providing analytical support.

Corps Emergency Authorizations for Coastal Protection Features:

- The State (OCPR) submitted to the Corps a proposal for emergency authorization that involves the Biloxi Marsh area in St. Bernard Parish, using booms and pilings with no sand berms. A separate request was submitted for sand berm construction along the Isle Dernieres island chain, utilizing Ship Shoal and South Pelto sand sources. Regional staff is supporting responses by OW.
- National Guard sand bag placement operations continue in Scofield Bay (Plaquemines Parish), authorized by the Corps under an emergency permit.

Corps Navigation Maintenance Dredging:

- Staff responded affirmatively to a Corps inquiry to include the EPA-designated SW Pass Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS) in their pending request to BP to drag sorbent material in SW Pass and the bar channel to see if oil is present in the lower portions of the water column or on the sediment surface. A similar operation is being carried out along two transects in the Mississippi River delta and two transects off shore from Port Fourchon.

OW Ecological Impact Analyses:

- Staff confirmed the presence of oil in the following coastal areas: Port Fourchon (Port Director, direct communication); and the mouths of South Pass and Pass a Loutre and in some associated marshes (reports from NOAA & USGS over flights).
- The Dredge operator working for the Corps reported on 5/18 no visual signs of surface oil at the EPA ODMDS and the Corps instructed the dredge to cease operations and notify UC immediately if oil is observed in the waters of the ODMDS.
- Preparing an internal draft discussion paper on funding proposals related to the potentially synergistic habitat effects of Gulf hypoxia and the oil spill, as well making the case for continued hypoxia research in the upper Mississippi River basin (studies that would not divert resources dedicated to the spill).
- Continuing efforts to build upon the combined OW, Region 6, and Region 4 ecological impacts document for use by OW managers, as well on worst case scenarios and ecological Q's and A's.

Data Management – Mapping Efforts

- Map/graphic image prepared of Mississippi River drainage basin, hypoxic zone and surface areal extent of oil as reported by NOAA on May 19, 2010.

NPDES

- Continued coordination with 6WQ, 6EN, 6RC, and HQ staff on NPDES permitting and enforcement issues.
- NPDES Permits and TMDL Branch continues to be available to provide technical assistance as needed.